

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 CEA-01

COME-00 EB-07 EA-06 FRB-03 IO-10 NEA-09 OPIC-03

TRSE-00 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 STR-01 TAR-01

AGR-05 SAJ-01 ISO-00 /116 W  
----- 088964

R 171718Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9356

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 04107

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, EGEN, UK, EEC

SUBJECT: EC MEMBERSHIP: A HARD SLOG IN THE LABOR PARTY

REF: LONDON 3812

1. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER WILSON FACES A FORMIDABLE  
TASK IN SELLING THE RENEGOTIATED EC MEMBERSHIP TERMS TO  
THE LABOR PARTY AND PERSUADING THE BRITISH ELECTORATE TO  
APPROVE CONTINUED UK MEMBERSHIP. HIS RATHER CHURLISH  
BEHAVIOR IN DUBLIN WAS DICTATED BY HIS PERCEPTION OF HIS  
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DOMESTIC POLITICAL POSITION, CONSIDERATION OF WHICH WILL

SIMILARLY INFLUENCE HIS ACTIONS AS THE REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN DEVELOPS. AS BOTH ANTI- AND PRO-MARKET FORCES IN THE LABOR PARTY ARE PREPARED TO FIGHT THE ISSUE TO THE BITTER END, THE LONG-POSTPONED SHOWDOWN RAISES AGAIN THE EVER PRESENT DANGER OF A SPLIT IN THE LABOR PARTY THAT COULD BRING DOWN THE GOVERNMENT. AVOIDANCE OF THIS THREAT WILL BE UPPERMOST IN WILSON'S MIND AS THE CAMPAIGN UNFOLDS AND HE TRIES TO KEEP THE UK IN THE EC. END SUMMARY.

2. PRIME MINISTER HAROLD WILSON'S CHURLISH ATTITUDE TOWARD HIS EC COLLEAGUES AND THE PRESS AT DUBLIN HAS DRAWN UNFAVORABLE MEDIA COMMENT HERE. HIS BEHAVIOR, HOWEVER, WAS DICTATED BY HIS APPRECIATION OF THE DIFFICULTY HE FACES IN OBTAINING A FAVORABLE VOTE ON THE EC REFERENDUM WITHOUT BITTERLY POLARIZING THE LABOR PARTY. AS ONE OF HIS CLOSE POLITICAL ADVISORS RECENTLY POINTED OUT TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER, IF WILSON HAD THANKED THE EC HEADS OF GOVERNMENT FOR AGREEING TO GENEROUS TERMS, HE WOULD HAVE SERIOUSLY PREJUDICED HIS CASE IN THE LABOR PARTY.

3. WILSON'S FIRST, AND PERHAPS EASIEST, TASK WILL BE TO OBTAIN CABINET APPROVAL OF THE RENEGOTIATED TERMS. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE CABINET WILL ENDORSE THE TERMS BY A MARGIN OF AT LEAST 2 TO 1. THE NUMBER OF DISSENTING VOTES, HOWEVER, SHOULD PROVIDE FIRST INDICATION OF WILSON'S STRENGTH AS PARTY LEADER ON THIS ISSUE AND HIS ABILITY TO INFLUENCE CABINET AND MPS. IF OPPONENTS ARE HELD TO HARD CORE OF 5 ANTI-MARKETEERS, HIS POSITION CAN BE JUDGED STRONG. AN OPPOSITION VOTE OF 8 OR 9 VOTES, ON THE OTHER HAND, WOULD INDICATE HIS INFLUENCE IS RELATIVELY WEAK. THE ANTI-MARKETEERS WILL BE WATCHING FOR ANY SIGN OF WEAKNESS THAT CAN BE EXPLOITED IN THE PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY (PLP), IN THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (NEC) AND AT THE SPECIAL PARTY CONFERENCE.

4. PRESS REPORTS LABOR'S ANTI-MARKETEERS ARE PREPARING FOR TOUGH FIGHT. MINISTERS WHO OPPOSE CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP ARE SAID TO BE PREPARING FOR DETAILED REVIEW OF TERMS IN CABINET AND TO ARGUE THAT RENEGOTIATION FAILED TO ACHIEVE MINIMUM GOALS SET FORTH IN PARTY MANIFESTO.  
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JUNIOR MINISTERS WHO OPPOSE UK MEMBERSHIP ARE ALSO REPORTEDLY PREPARED TO ASSERT THE SAME VIEW, AS ARE ANTI-MARKET BACKBENCHERS. IN EFFORT TO REDUCE THE LEVEL OF ACRIMONY, WILSON'S STAFF IS REPORTEDLY PREPARING "CODE OF CONDUCT" TO GOVERN PARTY DEBATE ON THE ISSUE. IN VIEW OF EMOTIONS ON BOTH SIDES AND WILSON'S POOR RECORD ON ENFORCING CABINET COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY DOCTRINE AND PARTY DISCIPLINE IN COMMONS, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT RULES

FOR PUBLIC DEBATE WILL HAVE MUCH EFFECT.

5. WE BELIEVE THE ABOVE FACTORS WILL CONSTRAIN WILSON, PREVENTING HIM FROM ADOPTING AGGRESSIVE, PRO-MARKET STANCE, AT LEAST EARLY IN CAMPAIGN. WE UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, HOME SECRETARY ROY JENKINS HAS CLEARED HIS ENGAGEMENT CALENDAR OF ALL ELSE IN ORDER TO PLAY AN ACTIVE AND LEADING ROLE IN PRO-MARKET CAMPAIGN. THIS WILL BE DEPARTURE FROM LOW-PROFILE HE HAS MAINTAINED SINCE HIS RETURN TO GOVERNMENT AND, OVER LONGER TERM, WILL PROBABLY DO LITTLE TO HELP HIS PROSPECTS FOR SUCCEEDING WILSON. ANTI-MARKETEERS SHORE, FOOT, BENN AND CASTLE ARE EXPECTED TO PLAY LEADING PARTS IN CAMPAIGN FOR THEIR SIDE. FOOT,

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R 171718Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 04107

HOWEVER, MAY FIND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS PROBLEMS DRASTICALLY LIMIT TIME HE CAN DEVOTE TO EC ISSUE.

6. ALTHOUGH WILSON SHOULD HAVE EASY TIME OBTAINING CABINET ENDORSEMENT OF RENEGOTIATED TERMS, LABOR PARTY NEC APPEARS TO BE DOMINATED BY ANTI-MARKET GROUP AND WILL PROBABLY VOTE AGAINST ACCEPTING TERMS. A NARROW AFFIRMATIVE VOTE, OR EVEN A STAND-OFF WOULD CONSTITUTE AN IMPORTANT VICTORY FOR PRO-MARKETEERS. NEC IS PRESENTLY CONFIDENTIAL

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CONSIDERING A MOTION BY ANTI-MARKETEERS TO MOVE DATE OF SPECIAL PARTY CONFERENCE (SCHEDULED FOR MAY 17) UP ONE MONTH, THEREBY INCREASING POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THAT MEETING WHICH IS EXPECTED TO COME OUT STRONGLY AGAINST CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP. APPROVAL OF CHANGE APPEARAS LIKELY, AND THE NEC VOTE ON THIS QUESTION WILL BE KEY INDICATOR OF ITS POSITION ON EC QUESTION. WHILE CHANGE IN CONFERENCE DATE IS NOT EXPECTED REVERSE PREVAILING SENTIMENT IN CABINET AND PLP, BOTH OF WHICH ARE FAVORABLE TO CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP, IT WILL ACCENTUATE DIVISIONS WITHIN PARTY AND INTENSIFY BITTERNESS OF ENSUING DEBATE.

7. THESE DEVELOPMENTS REINFORCE OUR EARLIER JUDGMENT THAT EC ISSUE WILL HAVE EXTREMELY DIVISIVE IMPACT ON LABOR PARTY AND WILL SEVERELY TEST ALL OF WILSON'S VAUNTED POLITICAL SKILLS. MOREOVER, THE STAKES MAY INCLUDE WILSON'S POLITICAL SURVIVAL AND THE DURABILITY OF THE LABOR GOVERNMENT, AS WELL AS BRITAIN'S CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP IN THE EC. WILSON'S ACTIONS WILL BE GUIDED ACCORDINGLY.

RICHARDSON

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